

Asks for Improvement Project to be a Priority in Next Highway Bill

April 28, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) advocated today for further Congressional support of the Louisiana Highway 1 improvement project. In his testimony before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rep. Melancon urged his colleagues to include LA-1 as a High Priority Project in the next surface transportation bill, to be drafted later this year.

"While every Member has infrastructure in their district that is important, few can boast the direct financial benefit that LA-1 offers," Rep. Melancon testified. "A 2008 economic impact study... concluded that a three-week loss of services or access to Port Fourchon would result in a loss of nearly \$10 billion in sales at U.S. firms, a loss of over \$2.8 billion in household earnings, and a loss of 77,440 jobs in this nation."

Melancon continued, **"As we recall too well, the economic impact of a shut-in oil and gas we experienced after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita make these findings more than just economic estimates. We have felt the tangible harm caused when Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production is forced to stop.... While I certainly do not expect that the Committee will fund the project at this full amount, I hope that the Committee will again recognize the importance of LA 1 as a critical energy corridor. "**

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to secure over \$126.5 million in federal funding and loans for the La. 1 improvement project, which will eventually elevate the highway from Golden Meadow to Fourchon and protect it from flooding. In 2005, Rep. Melancon worked to secure \$60 million for the project through the highway funding authorization bill (SAFETEA LU, H.R. 3).

The La. 1 project also received a \$60 million loan in 2005 from the federal TIFIA program, after Rep. Melancon urged U.S. Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta to approve the large loan because of the highway's regional and national significance as the sole evacuation route and access road to Port Fourchon and the LOOP. The project has also received over \$1.7 million through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, which Rep. Melancon helped establish with the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Rep. Melancon has obtained over \$4.8 million for La. 1 through the annual transportation appropriations process, including the FY09 and FY10 Omnibus Appropriations Bills.

* Below is Rep. Melancon's full testimony before the Subcommittee.

**Congressman Charlie Melancon
Testimony before the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
April 28, 2009**

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Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica,

□□□□□□□□□□ **Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to advocate for Louisiana Highway 1's inclusion as a High Priority Project within the next surface transportation legislation.**

□□□□□□□□□□ **First, I want to thank the Committee for recognizing the importance of LA 1 in SAFETEA-LU a couple of years ago.□ Without the Committee's significant investment in this High Priority Corridor, LA 1 would not be under construction right now.□ I understand that the contractor is working towards bringing the new bridge into service as early as August of this year.□□□**

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□□□□□□□□□□ **While every Member has infrastructure in their district that is important, few can boast the direct financial benefit that LA-1 offers to my district. A 2008 economic impact study conducted for the Greater Lafourche Port Commission and the South Louisiana Economic Council concluded that a three-week loss of services or access to Port Fourchon would result in a loss of nearly \$10 billion in sales at U.S. firms, a loss of over \$2.8 billion in household earnings, and a loss of 77,440 jobs in this nation.□ As we recall too well, the economic impact of a shut-in oil and gas we experienced after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita make these findings more than just economic estimates.□ We have felt the tangible harm caused when Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production is forced to stop.**

□□□□□□□□□□ **As phase 1 of the LA-1 project nears completion, my request to the Committee this year is to assist in the construction of phase 2 of the project.□ This next phase will extend the elevated highway from Port Fourchon within the levee system some 30 miles north to the city of Golden Meadow, LA.□ This phase is estimated to cost \$360 million.□ While I certainly do not expect that the Committee will fund the project at this full amount, I hope that the Committee will again recognize the importance of LA 1 as a critical energy corridor.**

The Committee's previous foresight enabled the construction of phase 1 of the project and we hope to build upon that success in this reauthorization.□ Thank you for this

opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to working with you on this Transportation Authorization measure.

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